

# Situations of *Al-Majiri* School, Gagi, Sokoto: Its Achievements and Challenges from Inception to Date

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## I. INTRODUCTION

*Al-majiri* Education Programme is a programme designed to cater for the *Almajirai* who are out-of-school in Northern Nigerian states, the programme is aimed at integrating traditional *Qur'anic* schools and western education under Universal Basic Education Commission. The establishment of *Al-majiri* Integrated Education is one of the current issues that required special intervention from the governments at all levels to take measures to curtail the menace of street begging, drug abuse, child trafficking, of children and youth in the name of pursuing *Qur'anic* Education. The *Al-majiri* (Itinerant *Qur'anic* School Pupils) constitutes the largest group of out-of-school children in Nigeria numbering over nine (9) million children.<sup>1</sup> This segment of Nigerian population poses tremendous challenges to attainment of Education For All (EFA) and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The objective of the programme is to:

1. Provide access and equity to Basic Education for all *Al-majiri* school age children;
2. Discourage and gradually eliminate itinerancy for all *Almajirai* in the country; and
3. Support the emergency of an enabling environment that could facilitate the effective integration of Islamic discipline into Basic Education Programme.<sup>2</sup>

The word "*Al-majiri*" is derived from the Arabic word "*Almuhajir*" Migrant the plural is "*Almuhajirun*" Migrants. It refers to a traditional method of learning and memorizing *Qur'an* among Hausa/Fulani communities, where children of varying age are sent out by their parents or guardians far away villages, towns and cities for *Qur'anic* education under care of Islamic scholar called *Malam*.<sup>3</sup> This *Qur'anic* traditional system of education becomes an issue of concern national and international bodies over years. This is

due to its negative effects on the lives and social wellbeing of *Almajirai* who become vulnerable to many social and moral vices as well breeding centre of agents of insecurity in the country and neighbouring hood. Hence the issue of *Al-majiri* becomes serious issue of national and international this because to tackle insecurity in the nation, especially the North Eastern part of Nigeria, where is the centre of Boko Haram insurgency activities. In addition to that Taiwo<sup>4</sup> pointed out that a recent report shown that there are more than 10 million *Al-majiri* on the streets of Northern Nigeria, without formal education and invariably going to face black future.

The Nigeria under leadership of the late President, Alh. Umar Musa Yar Adu'a had observed that the Northern Nigeria was left behind in terms of Western education, because, some parents prepared to educate their children Islamic education without much care with western education. As a result some scholars advocate for integrating Islamic education and Western education together, so as to minimise fear from the parents. In this regard the late president Alh. Umaru Musa Yar Adu'a was the first President to make an attempt to establish *Al-majiri* school in order to curtail the menace of *al-majiri* activities.

## II. HISTORICAL ORIGIN OF *AL-MAJIRI* SCHOOL IN SOKOTO STATE

The *Al-majiri* education system has been established many centuries ago. It is semi formal system of *Qur'anic* education in which children, mostly boys are sent by their parents to take up residence with Islamic *Mallams* for instruction in the *Qur'anic* and other Islamic texts<sup>5</sup>. Traditionally, children would be sent to places far away from their parents, where they would be under the custody of a *malam* to acquire religious knowledge while also learning to fend for themselves. They would beg for alms or serve in their teachers farms as a means of compensation for their religious

<sup>1</sup> Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC), Implementation of *Al-majiri* Education Programme by Federal Government. *Almajiri* Education Unit: Universal Basic Education Commission, Nigeria. 2010.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> U. A. Nasarawa, Integrating *almajiri* education for social security. A paper presented at the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference of the Counseling Association of Nigeria held at International Conference Centre Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, Osun State, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> F. J. Taiwo, Transforming the *almajiri* education for the benefit of the Nigerian society. *Journal of Education and Social Research*. V 3(9), 2013, Pp. 67-72.

<sup>5</sup> A. Alkali, Rescuing child beggars by reforming the *Qur'anic* education system. *News Nigeria*. 2001, 4<sup>th</sup> October.

education and upbringing<sup>6</sup>. Furthermore, Islam teaches great importance to knowledge and considers it the basis of human development and key to the growth of culture and civilization. So, the main aim and objectives is to enable one to live a life of good Muslim, benefit himself and his society<sup>7</sup>.

The establishment of *Al-majiri* Integrated School in Sokoto State will be link to the establishment of Islamic schools in Sokoto which was originated since the coming of Islam in northern Nigeria through traders and preachers. It is in this time Islamic scholarship has its origin / background in Sokoto state. Though during the time learning process undergoes through *MakarantarAllo* were a teacher will provide a center of learning (*MakarantarAllo*) in his residence or any place within his area where he teach the students Arabic Alphabets and followed by Qur'anic reading. After the completion of the Qur'anic recitation known as (*sauka*) the student will proceed to learning different Islamic sciences such as Islamic jurist prudence, Islamic creed, Arabic grammar and Arabic poems etc. this is how the situation is until the emergence of the reformer sheikh Usmanu ibn Fodiyo<sup>8</sup>. In 1903 the colonial masters gave birth to a new system of learning where a student will sit down on a desk in a class room while the teacher will remain standing teaching the student, therefore the prominent scholars at that time such as Alhaji Muhammad *Marafa* Dan Baba used the same method (colonial master method of teaching) to establish *Islamiyyah* schools in Sokoto popularly known as *Nizamiyyah* in 1965, where Arabic and Islamic studies were taught (*Ma'ahadal-Ilmi*). Through this system learning Arabic language was disseminated to all nook and cranny of Sokoto as primary level and whoever graduated from this school can further his education to secondary level with this certificate. Furthermore, many students were graduated from the school some are indigenes while others are from neighbouring areas such as Zamfara, Kebbi, Kano, Katsina, and even from Niger republic<sup>9</sup>.

Consequently, some of the students of this school were sent to Arab countries in- order to advance their studies in Arabic and Islamic studies. The achievements of this school (*ma'ahadullmi*) resulted into the creation of many *Islamiyyah* schools in different areas of Sokoto state like *MarhumuNata'ala* Asada Sokoto, Sidi Mamman Institute, *Islamiyyah Rungumi* and *Mas'udiyahmarafa Dan Baba* e.t.c.

<sup>6</sup>U. A. Nasarawa, Attitudes of *almajiri* schools' proprietors/teachers towards the integration of *almajiri* education in Sokoto North and South Local Governments Areas of Sokoto State. A paper presented at the 38<sup>th</sup> Annual International Conference of the Counseling Association of Nigeria held at Ibom Hall IBB Uyo, 2013.

<sup>7</sup>A. K. Sulaiman, The *almajiri* phenomenon study of the youth in traditional Qur'anic scholarship in Northern Nigeria. *The Humanities Journal 1(1)*, 2000, Pp. 27-47.

<sup>8</sup>M. Adam, Sirajo, M. S., Abubakar U. i., Mukhtar S., and Attahiru A. S., Tradition versus modernity: The origin and development of *Islamiyya* Schools in Sokoto State. An IBR TETFUND Research Seminar Paper. Presented at University Lecture Theatre, Sokoto State University, Sokoto, Sokoto State, Nigeria. On 21<sup>st</sup> January, 2006.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid

Therefore, for the future development and social wellbeing of *Almajirai* who become vulnerable to many social and moral vices as well as breeding centre for agents of insecurity in the country and neighbourhood? Successive Governments made several attempts to tackle this issue. In 2012 the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Good luck Jonathan commissioned *Al-mjiri* School Gagi in Sokoto State in his own effort to address *Al-majirci* Phenomenon in the Northern states, which is aimed at curbing social, economic and security challenges in the country<sup>10</sup>. Since then some state implement this programme into their states. Therefore, in order realize Millennium Development Goals and Education for All. Therefore to curb the number of out-of-school children, the programme should be implemented effectively in all Northern states.

The school was established with 50 males students with six teaching staff, to teach pupils areas assigned in the Time Table, the school was designed as a Boarding school. From there the school begins running its educational activities, the school was gradually improved from primary one (1) up to primary six (6).The school was successfully graduated its first set this year<sup>11</sup>.Moreover, the school from inception to date is running all primary courses including English, Math and computer studies.

### III. CONDITION AND ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE OF *AL-MAJIRI* SCHOOL, GAGI, SOKOTO

The *Al-majiri* School, Gagi was situated at Gagi area in Sokoto metropolis, Sokoto State. The school was built at the standard level provided with adequate facilities such as adequate classrooms, students' hostel, staff quarters, adequate toilets and bathrooms, computer laboratory, language laboratory, science laboratory, Clinic, sport fields, adequate water supply etc. as specified by National School Health Policy. The school was fenced with building for security purpose to the staff and students. The school population is gradually improved from fifty (50) students to two hundred plus. The *Al-majiri* School, Gagi is the best *Al-majiri* School in Sokoto in terms of structure and organisation. However, *Al-majiri* School, Gagi is provided with adequate teaching and learning materials, students are provided with school's uniforms free of charge in addition students are provided with three square meals daily.

The organizational structure of *Almajiri* Schools in Sokoto State varied from one *Almajiri* schools to another depending on the proprietor of the school. *Almajiri* School Gagi in particular is governed and run by the government under State Universal Education Board (SUBEB). The Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) in collaboration with SUBEB has the responsibilities of appointing and

<sup>10</sup>T. O. Isiaka, A pilot study of the challenges of infusing *almajiri*educational system into the Universal Basic Education in Sokoto, Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice 6(16)*, 2015, Pp. 10 -16.

<sup>11</sup> Oral interview Hussaini Abdullah. 45 years Principal *Al-majiri* School, Gagi, Sokoto, 28, July, 2017.

posting administrators of *Almajiri* School Gagi in the Sokoto State, it also has the responsibilities of recruiting and posting teaching and supporting staff to these schools. Furthermore, SUBEB and LGEAs have the responsibilities of supervisions and inspection of *Almajiri* School Gagi as well as provision and maintenance of school facilities such as buildings facilities, furniture facilities, teaching and learning materials etc<sup>12</sup>.

Principal is the executive administrator of *Almajiri* School Gagi in Sokoto State, he supervises both staff and students to ensure that everybody is doing the right thing at the right time. He also acts as middle man amongst SUBEB, LGEA and the staff in his school, control school records, finance and ensure teaching and learning environment is conducive.<sup>13</sup> The Principal also has the responsibility of planning, coordinating, organising and reporting school activities.

#### IV. CURRICULUM OF STUDY IN ALMAJIRI SCHOOL, GAGI, SOKOTO

It's know that since 1960 to date the some Northern Nigeria are sceptical with the Western Education, as a result they give priority to Islamic knowledge, in this regard our elders and leader of that time like Ahmad Bello *Sardaunan* Sokoto, they deemed it necessary to integrate Islamic education and Western education together in order to ensure that children from Northern Nigeria benefitted from Western education so that they might not be left behind. Many influential personalities particularly in Sokoto State were influenced by this idea among whom is Ahmadu Dan Baba who established the first *Nizamīya* school in 1960, where both Islamic and western are taught together. Furthermore, some prominent people in Sokoto participated in the system and contributed immensely towards the establishing and financing *Nizamīya Islamiyya* schools in Sokoto State, among which are former President Alhaji Shehu Usman Aliyu Shagari, Malam Sani Dingyadi, Sheikh Sidi Attahir, and Professor Ibrahim Makwashe of Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, etc. thus, the forum of *Jama'atu Nasarul Islam* was founded which paved the way for the establishment of some *Nizamīya* schools in then Sokoto State, one in Gwandu, Argungu and Yauri respectively.<sup>14</sup> From this system of *Nizamīya* schools, the *Almajiri* School Gagi developed its curriculum which is akin to the curriculum and method of *Nizamīya* School but with additional features.

*AZaure* programme was added to the *Almajiri* School curriculum which based on the traditional method of learning and teaching Islamic knowledge in a room or

recitation hall where *Almajiri* students gathered to received their Qur'anic studies in one umbrella, with a particular method. Those that did not memorize the Holy Qur'an used to memorise some verses (*Harda*) under the care of their teacher known as *Malam*, when *Malam* is satisfied with their student's mastery of the particular portion of the Qur'an he will instruct him to write other new verses for memorisation. However, for those who memorized the Holy Qur'an and graduated from this level known as *al-Iftada'iyah* and become *Malam* they will proceed to the secondary level of this type of education known *Karatum sani*, where they will learn different books of different fields from their *Malam*. In *Al-majiri* School Gagi the system of *Zaure* programme began around 6:30am to 8:30am the student gathered in one place or different room and reading the Qur'an, *hadith*, *Fiqhu*, *Tauhid* etc. after two hours, the students left the place and take breakfast after breakfast they will go and wear their uniforms for assembly<sup>15</sup>. Around 9:00am students enter classes and start taken lessons in accordance with the time table arrangement the subject of learning are English language, Arabic language, mathematics, Hadith, *fiqhu*, Taweed, (Sirraht) Biography of Prophet Muhammad (SAW) (peace be upon him and some companions like Abubakar, Umar, Uthman And Aliyu etc. After Zahr prayer *Zaure* teachers will come back for the second time, to teach the students and continue with the teaching till 4:00pm when the students will go back to their hostel and rest till *Magrib* prayer, from their they will take their dinner and go to the hostel for sleeping. Moreover, in *Al-majiri* School, Gagi curriculum the students learn some basic skills acquisition during weekend. Among the skills were computer studies, tailoring, carpentry works, etc.<sup>16</sup>

#### V. ACHIEVEMENTS OF AL-MAJIRI SCHOOL, GAGI, SOKOTO

*Al-majiri* School, Gagi made a tremendous achievements towards the actualisation of access and equity to basic education for *almajiri* school age children and integration of traditional Islamic education into basic education programme and to ensure education for all. Particularly, *Almajiri* School, Gagi made significance role in the enrolment of *Almajiri* students in the state. Initially the school started with very limited number of fifty *almajiri* students across the 23 Local Governments in the state, comprising only male students. The school started with minimum number of fifty students and five teaching staff, but school has gradually improved its enrolment in terms of students, teaching and supporting staff. The number of students increased from fifty students to two hundred plus, from five teachers to twenty three teaching staff, eleven supporting staff, six clinic staff and one laboratory attendant. The table I below shows the current students' enrolment of *Al-majiri* School, Gagi, Sokoto:

<sup>12</sup> Ibid Pp 3.

<sup>13</sup> G.A. Mahuta EDU 713: *Administration of Primary and Secondary Schools*. Unpublished Manuscript. Faculty of Education and Extension Services, Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto. P. 13, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> M. Adam, S. Muhammad, A. I. Usman., M. Sarkin-Kebbi., & A. A. Sifawa. Contribution of Islamiyya Schools toward the development of Arabic language in Sokoto State. 2016. Pp. 17 – 22

<sup>15</sup> Ibid Pp. 3

<sup>16</sup> Ibid Pp. 5

Table I: Students' Enrolment of *Al-majiri* School, Gagi, Sokoto

S/N	Class	No of Students
1	Primary 1	47
2	Primary 2	43
3	Primary 3	38
4	Primary 4	39
5	Primary 5	43
6	Primary 6	50
TOTAL		260

Source: Field's Work, 2017

One of its remarkable achievements is that the school was established with 50 students and now have two hundred and sixty students, out of which fifty students of it first seat graduated this year 2017<sup>17</sup>. With Development the school contributes a lot in upgrading Islamic and western education in Sokoto State.

Beside that the *Almajiri* School, Gagi helps in transforming the life of its students from the life of street begging and security threats to the real students' life in the state by reducing the number of streets *almajiri* who pose economic and security threats in Sokoto State. It also helps in transforming *almajiri* students economically by training its students with basic entrepreneur skills acquisitions, such as computer studies, carpentry works, tailoring, etc. In every weekend students of *Almajiri* School, Gagi are engage with various skills acquisitions, so that at end of the programme even without government's job then can be self-employed through entrepreneurship.

## VI. CHALLENGES OF ALMAJIRI SCHOOL, GAGI, SOKOTO

*Almajiri* School, Gagi in particular like any other *Almajiri* school, it faces some challenges which undermined its activities towards the realisation of the goals of *almajiri* education in Nigeria. Some of these challenges include:

### 1. Misconception about the *Al-majiri* Education Programme

There are misconception about the need or otherwise of *almajiri* education programme among society, elites and political leaders in Northern Nigeria. Some advocate for the programme while some sees it as encouraging activities which will not help to curtail this undesirable attitudes among Hausa/Fulani.). Another threatening problem is lack consensus among stakeholders of *almajiri* education on the needs of integrated *almajiri* education system in Nigeria. Kumolu<sup>18</sup> report that a practice that President Good luck Jonathan recently commissioned is described as "dangerous to national development," the *Almajiri* tradition has once again

occupied most national discourse, especially with the recent introduction of *Almajiri* Model Education by the Federal Government. Niger State Governor and Chairman of the Northern Governors' Forum, Dr. Babangida Aliyu, had at a recent forum, admitted that:

*"The system of Almajiri served a good purpose in the past...but we have passed that stage now. We have now reached a situation with respect to Almajiri where we have to be 'wicked' in order to be good to ourselves. We must say, 'No,' to this system and then work out how to integrate those (Almajiris) properly."* (kumolu, 2012 Pp.1-2).<sup>19</sup>

Such perception discourages the efforts of government and other individuals toward *almajiri* education programme. However, this assertion fails to realise the increasing number of *almajiri* on the streets of Nigeria, as well as the right of every Nigerian child to basic education irrespective of their status, or backgrounds, which was enshrined in the Nigerian philosophy of education which stipulates equal educational opportunity to all citizens irrespective of their physical or mental disabilities. As well as Millennium Development Goals which advocate for education for all and health for all, and this could not be achieved without educating these streets baggers (*almajirrai*).

### 2. Poor Enrolment

Despite the number of *almajiri* within and outside Sokoto metropolis which is up to thousands, the *Almajiri* School, Gagi is able to enrolled only two hundred plus *almajiri* students to date, which is insignificance as compared to the number of *almajiri* on streets of Sokoto State. From the students data enrolment of *Almajiri* School, Gagi it shown that the maximum number of students admitted into this school each year doesn't exceed fifty students, despite that many *almajiri* parents want enrol their children into this school but they were denied due to the limited number of students to be admitted into *Almajiri* School, Gagi.

### 3. Poor Implementation of the Programme

The *Al-majiri* School, Gagi was constructed established by the Federal Government, but the school was handed over to the state, while the state handed it over to Local Government Education Authority under the supervision of State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). This is against the initial plan of *almajiri* education programme, and also limited the activities of the programme. For *almajiri* programme to succeed is not one man's job, therefore government at all levels needs to intensify their efforts towards it, in order to actualise the goals of *almajiri* education in Nigeria.

### 4. Inadequate Funding

<sup>17</sup>Ibid. Pp. 5

<sup>18</sup> C. Kumolu, *Al-majiri* education: Modern gang up against ancient tradition. *Vanguard News Nigeria*. 2012, 26<sup>th</sup> April. Elect.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid Pp. 11

Funding is a critical issue in Nigerian education system, for *almajiri* education programme to succeed there is need of huge amount of money to be injected to support the programme effectively. Inadequate funding is one of the challenges of *Al-majiri* School, Gagi, and the main source funding this school State Government through the Local Government Education Authority which is grossly inadequate to cater for the need of expansion. The school needs to expand its facilities so as to accommodate more students and staff due to the population of *al-majiri* in the state.

#### VII. CONCLUSION

*Al-majiri* School, Gagi is the first *al-majiri* school founded in Nigeria and best of its types particularly in Sokoto State. This school played a significant role in transforming the life of *al-majiri* children socially, morally, religiously, and economically. Therefore, based on the proliferation of *al-majiri* activities Northern Nigeria and particularly in Sokoto State which was triggered by the current economic hardship, superstitions and beliefs as well as the right of these vulnerable *al-majiri* children to equal educational opportunity irrespective of their physical or mental disabilities, *al-majiri* education should be maintained, improved and made compulsory for all *al-majiri* in the state.

#### VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Northern leaders, elites and political figures should have a common consensus on the need of *al-majiri* education in Northern Nigeria and speak with one voice towards the realisation of Millennium Development Goals which stipulates education for all and health for all in the region, in order to face reality of this *al-majiri* epidemic among Hausa/Fulani communities.
2. Facilities of *Al-majiri* School, Gagi should be increased and expanded to the extent that it can accommodate many *al-majiri* students as compared to their population in the state. Many of this type of school should be established in each Local Government. Government should ensure that only *al-majiri* children are admitted into these schools.
3. The activities of *Al-majiri* School, Gagi need to be reviewed extensively so as to meet the current challenges of this programme for effective implementation of the programme.
4. For the successful implementation of *al-majiri* education programme in Nigeria and Sokoto State in particular, there should be adequate funding for the programme. As thus government at all levels, NGOs and other individuals should intensify their effort in funding this programme. Money allocated to the programme should be used judiciously.